

# Ag Census response will impact farm policy and industry

DOVER, Del. – Beginning in December, farmers in Delaware and Maryland will have the opportunity to make a positive impact on their communities and industry by taking part in the 2017 Census of Agriculture. Conducted every five years by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's National Agricultural Statistics Service, the census, starting to be mailed out this week, is a complete count of all U.S. farms, ranches, and those who operate them.

Census data are used by all those who serve farmers and rural communities from federal, state and local governments to agribusinesses, trade associations, researchers, and many others. For example, public officials use the data when shaping farm policy, and agribusinesses factor it into their planning efforts.

"Your answers to the census impact farm programs and rural services that support your community," said Joe Bartenfelder, Maryland Secretary of Agriculture. "Good policies and services are rooted in quality data. We want all farms counted because there's strength in numbers that only the census can reveal," said Michael Scuse, Delaware Secretary of Agriculture.

This year, NASS has extensively revised the online census questionnaire at [www.agcounts.usda.gov](http://www.agcounts.usda.gov) to make it more convenient for producers. Farmers can either mail in their completed census form or take advantage of new time-saving features by responding online. The online system calculates totals for the producer and skips sections that do not pertain to the operation. The census response deadline is February 5, 2018, with results of the census released in 2019.

In the 2012 census, Delaware farmers reported a total of 2,451 farms, spanning over 508 thousand acres. These numbers represented four percent decrease in the number and Delaware farms from the previous census in 2007. Market value of agricultural products sold was \$1.3 billion, an increase of 18 percent from the previous census for Delaware. This telling information and thousands of additional farm and ranch statistics are only available every five years, as a direct result of responses to the census.

“The census remains the only source of uniform, comprehensive agricultural data for every state and county in the nation,” said Dale P. Hawks, Maryland/Delaware State Statistician for USDA’s NASS Northeastern Region. “It’s a critical tool that gives producers a voice and opportunity to influence decisions that will shape the future of their operations, communities, and industries.”

The 2017 Census of Agriculture will collect new information including data on active service and military veteran farmers, as well as expanded questions on food marketing practices and on-farm decision-making to better capture the roles and contributions of beginning farmers, women farmers, and other involved in running the business.

For more information about the upcoming census, visit [www.agcensus.usda.gov](http://www.agcensus.usda.gov) or call (888) 424-7828.

###

Media Contact: Stacey Hofmann, 302-698-4542,  
[Stacey.Hofmann@delaware.gov](mailto:Stacey.Hofmann@delaware.gov)